Verses.

William Leonard Gage.

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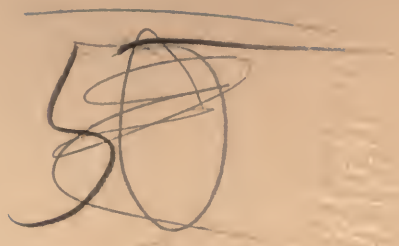

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To Miss & Mrs Goodell

with the Christmas

greetings of the Auth

Xtmas 1870

VERSES.

BY

William Leonard Gage.

New York:
HURD & HOUGHTON.
1870.

Press of Case, Lockwood & Brainard, Hartford.

PS
1729
G121v

WILL my beloved sister accept this little volume, whose only apology for existing is that these poor Verses have already found undeserved favor in her sight. From the corners of newspapers, from the pages of hymn books, and from the fading collections of army songs I have brought them together, sifted them thoroughly, and culled out only those which seem to have any dew upon them still. They are unworthy of publication, but friendly eyes may scan them with gentle forbearance.

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JESUS WEPT.

Not more stern the voice of sorrow,
When the sisters, robbed of gladness,
Filled with sadness,
Yet not doubting Jesus' grace,
Sought his face;
Than to us in homes deserted,
Stands our Hope with look averted,
And Grief takes the empty place.

Hearts change not as pass the ages,
And the love that sisters render,
Passing tender,
And the love that brothers claim,
Still the same;
And our Jesus changes never,
Yesterday, to-day, forever,
Filled with sweetness his dear name.

Now the immortal weds the mortal;
God himself soft tears has given;
And deep riven,
With the aching, wounding smart,
God's own heart;
And to us, in all our weakness,
Jesus comes in all his meekness,
Jesus comes and bears our part.

MISAPPREHENSION.

AFTER THE SPANISH OF CADALSO.

Thou deadliest blight on life's fair growths,
Thou foulest rust on life's clear face,
Thou darkest cloud in life's bright stream,
Would that in one relentless stroke
I might forever strike thy name
From the long list of words: the source
Thou art of all our deepest pains,
The sore thou art that never heals,
And hid away within the heart,
Thou liv'st thy slow consuming life,
And burnest there with secret fear.

If, in that world that follows this,
We shall communicate our thought,
God grant the ennobling of our state
That it be without speech: that heart
Touch heart in apprehension; that tongues
Mar not with their half utterance;
That soul and soul stand not apart,
Perplexed with strange and darkened words,
Their signals only partly clear,
But overlapping soul on soul,
And interfusing soul in soul,
Mute words give voice to clear-toned thoughts.

But here, in this sad life of ours,
The tongue, our servant all untrained,
So clumsy, rude, and void of grace,
Is overburdened with its trusts,
And even a thin and subtle cloud of smoke,
Something, yet nothing, floats between,
And parts those souls whom God wrote friends.
To weep o'er this were all in vain,
To curse it were to do God wrong.
The darkling glass will perish *here*.
And *there* we'll know as we are known.

THE SILVER DOOR.

When the joy and the gladness of winter are gone,
And hushed into silence the merry bells' song;
When the skate's sharp ring fills the air no more,
And the flashing gleam of its steel is o'er;
When far and near on each merry hill-side,
The arrowy sleds, full freighted, glide;
We ask, ere we can the glad winter dismiss,
Will the spring equal this?

Equal this? The gladdening, joy-bringing time,
The year's dewy morning, the birds' golden prime,
When flushed with life is each breathing thing,
Overflowingly full every pleasure's spring,
The soft south wind kindly greeting the cheek,
Nature's numberless voices that cheeringly speak,
Oh! yes, we are glad that the winter is o'er,
For we love the spring more.

But from winter to spring the way is long,
My heart then desolate, cheerless my song;
We seem to be passing through alleys dark,
To be groping where no token we mark
Of the light and the brightness soon to come,
And the dreary weeks leave us songless and dumb.
Oh! how wearily pass the days away,
And how joyless the May.

Yet not unrelieved is this pathway of gloom,
For, groping onward from room to room,
We meet here and there a silver door,
Flashing white gleams on the darkened floor;
We stand for a moment in blinding light,
And pass again into silence and night.
And a silver door is each bright, glad day
'Mid the storm weeks of May.

VOICELESS WORDS.

—|—

Deaf ears catch not the boisterous word,
The keen edged sword
Of loud, sharp speech; but soft, low tones,
Half stifled groans,
The murmured base of sorrow's voice,
Sound without noise.

And wouldst thou reach the ear of Heaven?
The quiet even
Is thy best hour; those distant bounds
Catch low-voiced sounds.
No barrier to the humble call
Is Heaven's wall.

Wouldst thou the portion of the meek?
Then ever seek
In silence, and at thy command
Lies the whole land;
The crown, the gift of meekness's worth,
Is all the earth.

The speechless infant is more dear,
To us more near,
Than many men full grown and wise;
And in Christ's eyes
His little ones give purest joy
Without alloy.

The little ones that meekly stand
Clasped in his hand;
Who nobly bear a voiceless part
Are in his heart;
To whom on earth the least is given
Are first in Heaven.

ON THE RIVER.

When the sun's fierce rays beat madly down,
And the smothering dust-clouds fill the town,
And on noon-day throngs of the toiling people
Falls no line of shade from the glaring steeple,
When the hot bricks burn with hidden fire,
And hiss under foot with pent up ire,
Oh! it makes my heart with rapture thrill
To seek the river so blue and still.

There are days when my soul is aweary of life,
Aweary of care and labor and strife,
When tired and worn by the great world's commotion,
I would fain be soothed by the voice of the ocean;
Then I look with joy on the waters' gleam,
And I restfully glide o'er the pleasant stream,
And it makes my heart with rapture thrill
To sail on the river so blue and still.

If my boat were not a part of my life,
In family tie next to child and wife,
My constant friend in long months of ailing,
In friendship more fast than fast in sailing,
I might better love the crowded street,
And the stranger faces I chance to meet;
But it makes my heart with rapture thrill
To seek the river so blue and still.

A docile child is my "River Bird;"
Like a docile child it heeds my word;
My touch guides it safe where the eddies are whirling,
My touch wards it off where the breakers are curling;
It wrestles with tides and with currents strong,
And its laughing prow raises victory's song.
Ah! it makes my whole frame with rapture thrill
To sail on the river so blue and still.

THE THREE WORDS OF FAITH.

FROM THE GERMAN OF SCHILLER.

THREE Words there are, of meaning deep,
They fly from tongue to tongue;
Yet still no place they rightly keep,
Save in the heart alone.
And he who would Worth's crown receive,
Must first in these Three Words believe.

First, Freedom—'tis man's native right
Be he in fetters born;
A rabble's cry has not the might
To turn this word to scorn.
Fearful the Slave who breaks his chain,
Not fearful they who free remain.

And Virtue—this no hollow name,
For using it was given;
To raise the stumbling, Virtue came,
To help the soul to Heaven.
Reason, in vain, her veil would raise,
Sucklings and babes perfect her praise.

And God—His holy will still lives,
  While men toss tempest-wrecked;
Mandates to Time and Space He gives,
  And strength to souls elect;
And what to us is discord strange,
Is peace to Him who knows no change.

And these Three Words of meaning deep,
  Send them from tongue to tongue;
Yet still no place they rightly keep,
  Save in the heart alone.
Ever shall he Worth's crown receive
Who shall in these Three Words believe.

THE SOLDIER'S DREAM.

Home is not far away
  When gentle slumbers come,
Leagues vanish into naught—
  There stands my home.
Dreams bring it close to me,
Faces I plainly see,
Why should I doubting be,
  These are my own.

So in the silent night,
  While comrades sleeping lie,
Lo! they take up their march
  And homeward hie.
Souls drag no heavy load,
Souls take the briefest road,
Souls need no spurring goad
  Homeward to fly.

Dreams are the soldier's boon;
  Hearts which through daylight moan,
When night brings home so near,
  Beat not alone.
Though weary seem the day,
Keep strong the heart and say,
As tired wanderers may,
  Night brings me home.

WAR'S WORK.

If fighting were only hunting,
If banners were only bunting,
  Now and henceforth,
  Men of the North,
Life would be a play-day,
The best day would be pay-day,
Every day a gay-day,
  Where soldiers are.

But fighting is more than hunting,
And banners are more than bunting,
  Now and henceforth,
  Men of the North.
Life is more than play-day,
Not every day a pay-day,
Not all bright as May-day,
  Where soldiers are.

CONQUER THY HEART.

"HE THAT RULETH HIS SPIRIT IS BETTER THAN HE THAT TAKETH A CITY."

Does thy heart tempt thee away from the plain path of duty?
Conquer thy heart;
Think'st thou that life runs not roughly through valleys of beauty?
Look to thy part;
Wondering eyes may behold thee lifting on high the ungracious cross.
Only be true;
For Christ's glad smile thou can'st easily reckon all things but loss;
Doubt not, but do.

Is thy heart filled with a gnawing, embittering pride?
Conquer thy heart;
Hurl it down, slay it, and cast it quickly aside,
See to thy part;
Tender and sore though thy hidden heart be with yesterday's bruises,
God knows it all;
Hard are the whip-cords and the scourges the dear God in wisdom uses,
Bitter the fall.

And should thy heart chafe in madness and foam at its chain,
Conquer thy heart;
Firm be thy hand, and its fury firmly restrain,
Act thou thy part;
Curb thou thy steed, Knight of God, with an iron arm, and fearing naught
Thy saddle bestride;
Lift up thine eye, as the prince of himself and his own ruler ought,
A Conqueror ride.

A VOICE OUT OF THE STORM.

My friend of many years, whose name the musical world will cipher out of the initials A. P., will remember when these words were written in a boat overhanging the stern of the ship, amid the howlings and crashing of a tempestuous gale, and addressed to her.

We left the stable shore when Ocean smiled,
With forehead all unruffled and with accents mild,
It lured us on—
But now its smiles have been transformed to frowns,
Its hoarse, harsh voice in tones of anger sounds,
Its look of love is gone.

But, though the maddened waves in fury lash,
And round our boat's stout sides in envy dash,
We know no fear.
We see a lofty beauty in the cresting foam,
And richer melody the wild waves' tone
Than anthems on our ear.

Soon thou wilt launch afresh upon Life's main;
Let cares and raging passions compass thee in vain—
Yield not thy soul.
Mark thou in Life as well as Ocean's storms
That which the beauty, not the terror, forms,
And Faith shall make thee whole.

THE DISCIPLE.

Who meekly folds his hand in Jesus's palm,
And follows him through dusty lane and street,
Through store and market place, at home, abroad,
And in the busy haunts of men, as much
As in the lonely stillness of the night,
Clings ever nearer to the Lord's close touch,
To me is Christ's disciple; if with mine
His heart-beats do but throb in unison,
Though eye see not as eye, we'll waiting stand,
Till when the thin disguise of speech shall fall,
On his brow shall be written, Christ my all.

THE CRIMSON TREE.

I PASSED through the woods of an Autumn day,
And watched the flashing glory
Of oak, and walnut, and maple, and fir,
And heeded their saddening story.
The sermon they preached was searching and deep;
But the beauty of their strain,
The glittering hues on the mountain steep,
Hushed the troubled thoughts again.
'Twas picture worthy of Artist Divine,
Where splendor heaped on splendor.
Where lightness with dark, where somber with gay,
Where rocks and leafage tender,
Where blue, and golden, and brown, and green
Melted into an artist's dream.

And the pictured temple myriad hued,
Reared on the leafy sod,
Made me inwardly whisper, in accents subdued,
"Its Builder and Maker is God."
As I looked, I saw the color of blood;
One tree with crimson dye,
Reached upward above the colored flood,
And touched the gentle sky.
Yet 'twas a hue from God's own hand,
His touch had set it there;
Who could never impose on himself command
To mar a dream so fair.

And so when I look on another scene,
  The blessings of Home and Land,
The flaming, golden, myriad tints,
  The splendors on every hand,
And see the solemn crimson of blood,
  It blends with the flashing glory,
And God's own pencil throws a flood
  Of light on the saddening story.
And though we sometimes sit and weep,
  At the crimsoned waters flowing,
At the crimsoned leaves on the mountain side,
  At the crimsoned sod slow-growing,
Yet the blending of tints, of somber with gay,
  Reveals the hand of the Lord;
And we gladly and yet all solemnly say,
  "The Builder and Maker is God."

WARNINGS.

Mark the river's peaceful flowing
To the distant sea,
Not a hint its waters showing
Where the breakers be;
See the boat in silence gliding,
By the grassy shore,
Every boisterous wave subsiding,
Every angry roar.

But there is a place of warning,
Bidding you beware,
Half foretelling dangers dawning,
Sternly preaching care;
Ere you touch the treacherous ocean,
Ere you greet the sea,
God raised up the fierce commotion
Where the breakers be.

If you heed those billowy noises,
Given you to hear,
Heed those crested, dashing voices
Uttered in your ear,
All the sea can never harm you,
Menacing in vain,
All the sea cannot alarm you,
Broken is its chain.

And though it may flash in splendor
  Under June's mild sun,
Lie to you in accents tender.
  Beckoning you to come,
Let the breakers be your token,
  Dashing on the bar,
Wanton words will soon be broken,
  Heed them from afar.

LINES ADDRESSED TO M. T.,

ON RECEIVING THE FIRST SPRING FLOWER.

While yet the naked hillsides all are sere,
And while so drear
The tapering columns of the leafless trees,
Swayed by the breeze,
The nestling floweret makes its firm protest,
Bids the long winter sink to silent rest.
And, though alone in beauty and so small,
Heralds the summer with emphatic call.

See how it hides beside some sheltering rock
Where tall trees mock
Its littleness: yet of no taunts afraid,
And undismayed
By all the savage wildness of the land,
In utter solitude it dares to stand,
And prophesy, with strong yet gentle voice,
Of larger beauty, and of gifts more choice.

Didst thou, dear maid, thy pattern find in this?
Thou didst not miss
A sweet example, one more finely true,
Than this to you
Were scarcely met: this harbinger of spring,
This sheltered, beautiful and gentle thing,
Fair in the present, fairer yet to be,
Finds its true mirror fitly framed in thee.

PRESSING ONWARD.

Pressing onward, ever onward,
For the heavenly prize,
And forgetting sins besetting,
Looking to the skies;
In temptations, succor Lord,
Stay my weakness with thy word;
Hoping ever, doubting never,
Onward to the prize.

Pressing onward, ever onward,
To the Lamb's pure throne;
Always longing for the morning,
When he claims his own;
Through the darkness of the night,
I discern the brighter light;
Through the portals of the immortals,
See my gleaming crown.

Saviour holy, Jesus lowly,
Stand at my right hand;
Lead me onward, ever onward,
To the promised land.
Part the Jordan at my feet,
Take me to thy heavenly seat,
Throwing o'er me robes of glory,
Let me reign with thee.

JESUS, GO BEFORE.

FROM THE GERMAN OF ZINZENDORF.

JESUS, go before,
Open heaven's door,
Not much longer will we tarry,
After Thee our cross to carry,
Lead us by the hand
To the promised land.

Though we prosper not,
Stand we in our lot;
Even in the darkest days, Lord,
Sad complaints we will not raise, Lord;
For through Sorrow's sea
Leads the way to Thee.

If some painful smart
Anguishes our heart,
If another's grieving move us,
Let the fiery trial prove us;
Thy own patience give,
Patiently to live.

Order all our way
While on earth we stay;
Rough the paths through which we're faring,
Ne'er withheld our Father's caring;
Jesus, go before,
Open heaven's door.

A PILGRIM SONG.

WHERE are now those Pilgrim Fathers?
Where that youthful, stalwart band?
Where the men who died like martyrs
On that unknown Plymouth Strand?

In the dim forgotten furrows,
Side by side their ashes lie,
But they live in other faces,
For they were not born to die.

And our veins still bear the currents
Of their own pure-hearted blood,
And our faces flush and mantle
With the same heroic flood.

And the words they loved and cherished,
In our souls shall kindling, burn,
And the faith they nobly nourished,
Is the faith to which we yearn.

Never be their names forgotten,
Ne'er unhonored be their worth,
And with festal songs we hail them,
Men of more than royal birth.

TRIBUTE TO MENDELSSOHN.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GLIEBEL.

ORIGINAL.

Ich klage nicht um dich, du hast gelebt,
  An Jahren jung, an Werken wie ein Greis.
Als knabe Meister, hast das Lorbeerreis
  In ungebleichte Locken du verwebt.
Kurz war dein Pfad, doch trug er Blum' an Blume,
Und wie Achill sankst du in deinem Ruhme.
  Ich klag um uns—dann unser ist das Leid.

TRANSLATION.

'Tis not for thee I grieve, thy work is done:
  Though young in years, thy deeds sum up a life:
Our master even as a child, thine own
  Unfaded locks must crown thine ended strife.
Short was thy path, yet flower it bore on flower:
Thou, like Achilles, sank'st in a golden hour.
  I grieve for us—for only we have lost.

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